

### *The CHAMPVA Dependent Coverage Extension Act Included in the National Defense Authorization Act*

Washington, DC – Friday, the House of Representatives passed Congressman Harry Teague's amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would extend health care coverage for dependents of disabled veterans and veterans who die from service connected disabilities. Congressman Teague's amendment, the CHAMPVA Dependent Coverage Extension Act, would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to allow coverage for veteran's dependents to the age of 26, up from the current age of 18, or 23 if a full-time student. The NDAA passed the House by a vote of 229 to 186.

"Our disabled veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and it is our duty to make sure that they and their families have access to quality, affordable health care. At the very least, we must provide these heroes with the same health insurance benefits afforded civilians," said Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, in a statement on the House floor today. "We should correct this wrong immediately. We should do what's right for our veterans."

Teague's provision would make one of the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), signed in to law earlier this year, available to families that depend on health insurance governed by the VA. Under the PPACA, individuals with private health insurance will be able to provide coverage to their dependent children up to the age of 26. The extended benefit in this amendment provides would take effect on October 1st of this year.

“Representative Harry Teague and other lawmakers deserve to be commended for their efforts to increase the maximum age for coverage of dependent children under CHAMPVA from 23 to 26. This recognizes the nation’s duty to ensure the dependents and survivors of severely disabled veterans have access to high-quality, affordable health care on a par with health insurance benefits afforded civilians under the health care reform act,” said Disabled American Veterans National Commander Roberto Barrera.

This year’s National Defense Authorization Act makes record investments in our nation’s military, authorizing a \$726 billion budget to strengthen our national security, provide our brave service members with the tools to do their jobs, and take care of their families who share in their sacrifices. In addition to Congressman Teague’s CHAMPVA provision, the NDAA includes additional support for service members and their families, providing troops with a 1.9% pay raise, increases the family separation allowance, and increases hostile fire and imminent danger pay while also expanding college loan repayment benefits and career options.

The NDAA also strengthens counterterrorism efforts while enhancing force protection needs in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Act provides an increase in funds for missile defense and increases nonproliferation efforts to secure nuclear materials. NDAA will also strengthen troop readiness by providing funding military construction and training needs while also providing for new materials and weapons systems.

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